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OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT

- USSR -

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SOVIET SCHOOLS OF GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE NEW PHASE OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT

This is a translation of an article written by
L. Il'yushin, Minister of Education BSSR, in Kom-
munist Belorussii (Communist of Belorussia), No 5,
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The Soviet government builds its schools in such a way that they serve the people, bring knowledge to the workers, promote the development of abilities and talents of the growing generation, educate it in the spirit of communism, and form a materialist ideology in youth. Our schools have achieved great success in raising a remarkable generation of young people who dedicate all their knowledge to the building of communism and to selfless devotion to their motherland. In scope and level of development of public education our country knows no equals. This is clearly apparent also on the example of the Belorussian SSR.

In the pre-revolutionary period Belorussia was, economically and culturally, one of the backward hinterlands of tsarist Russia. There were no more than 50 students per thousand people; about 50 percent of the population was illiterate. The tsarist government had obstructed the development of the national culture of the Belorussian people and had deliberately kept the workers in ignorance.

In the years of the Soviet regime under the leadership of the Communist party and with the brotherly assistance of the great Russian people, as well as other peoples of our country, the Belorussian people achieved vast progress in the development of industry and agriculture and in increasing the material prosperity and cultural level of the workers. In the Belorussian SSR illiteracy among adults has been discontinued forever, a compulsory seven-year general education has been realized, and secondary education has been widely developed in cities and rural districts. At present 12,406 schools of general education with 1,275,000 pupils, among them about 190,000 in the eight to tenth classes, are in operation in the republic.

Before the October revolution there was not one higher educational institution on the territory of the Belorussian SSR, whereas at present there are over 110,000 students in the 25 higher educational institutions and 105 technical schools of our republic. One of our greatest achievements is the creation of numerous cadres of national intelligentsia. The army of teachers numbers over 80,000 people, and a total of 215,000 specialists with higher and secondary education are at work in various branches of the national economy and agriculture.

While we are justified in taking pride in the progress achieved in the development of public education, we cannot fail to see the new tasks which have arisen before the schools or to be aware of the school's backwardness in relation to present-day requirements. The aims of communist building, brought forward by the 21st Party Congress, demand a drastic strengthening of the connection between school and life and a radical reconstruction of the entire system of education of young students. The question of the necessity to reorganize the schools, raised on the initiative of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev, has found quick response among the broad masses of workers. Measures towards the further development of the system of public education worked out by the party and the government have received the unanimous support and approval of all Soviet people.

The Communist party has indicated that the consistent realization of the principle of combining education with socially-useful labor must become the main link in the reorganization of schools. The great importance of this principle had been more than once emphasized by V.I. Lenin. He had pointed out that the young generation "must organize all the tasks of their studies in such a way that every day, in every village and every city, young people be made to solve in practice any of the problems of common labor, be it the smallest or the simplest." (Works, Vol 31, p 274). Labor is a powerful means of communist education. In the process of labor the abilities and talents of children become revealed and developed, and the high moral qualities of our youths become shaped.

The training of thoroughly educated people with a good knowledge of scientific principles and capable of doing systematic work and the cultivation in young people of a deep respect for the principles of socialist society and a desire to be useful to society and participate actively in the production of material values necessary to society must become the main object of the school. It is necessary, from the very first years of the training of children, to prepare them psychologically and practically for the participation in socially-useful labor. Beginning at the age of 15-16, all

young people must be enrolled in productive labor, and all of their further education must be organically tied to life and to the practice of communist building.

After the 20th Party Congress, certain measures towards overcoming the alienation of education from life, towards eliminating abstractness and formalism from the teaching and the learning of students, were put into practice in the republic. Certain changes aiming at the realization of polytechnic education and the acquainting of students with the application of scientific laws to industry, have been made in curricula and programs, and the relationship of theory and practice in the process of training has become closer. Study of the bases of industrial and agricultural production and, in a number of schools, the industrial specialization of students have been put into practice. This experiment has been fully justified.

In the Orsha secondary school No 1, industrial-training practice and vocational training are carried out on the base of a machine-tool-building plant and a sewing-machine plant. In 1958, a total of 40 out of 47 tenth-class pupils received the specialty of lathe-operator and milling-machine operators. All of them do good work in enterprises of the city of Orsha.

In the Gorodeya secondary school of Nesvizhskiy Rayon, practical agricultural studies are carried out in kolkhoz fields and animal husbandry farms. During the last two years 40 of the graduating students of that school became specialized tractor operators, 60 -- assistant combine operators, 20 -- film technicians, and 26 -- automobile drivers.

Industrial student brigades, as one of the forms of industrial training and enlistment of school children in feasible socially-useful labor, have become prevalent in the kolkhozes of the republic. They combine the study of scientific principles with the pupil's participation in a variety of agricultural operations during the whole year.

However, the basic mass of our school still operates in the old way. Practice has shown that the problem of overcoming the alienation of education from life cannot be successfully solved within the frames of the old set system of school education. Life demands that the whole content of school work and its purpose fully correspond to the tasks of communist building in the new stage of the development of our country.

The secondary school is facing the full strength of the problem of the necessity of providing, in senior classes, side by side with general and polytechnical education, also professional training in concrete forms of labor, in order to speed up young peoples' participation in the practical activities of various branches of the national economy. In

this connection, the completion of secondary education is divided into two stages. The first step in secondary education will be the eight-year school, compulsory for all children of seven to 15-16. The transition to general eight-year education will be a new big step ahead in the development of popular education. Increasing the time of compulsory studies by a year will allow to raise the standard of training and polytechnic education, and improve the training of youths for socially-useful labor. In addition, it will help solve the problem of finding suitable jobs for the young people because of the older age of graduates of eight-year schools. The task of the eight-year school includes systematic study of scientific principles in connection with life and practice; realization of the labor, physical, moral, and esthetic education of pupils; and their training for the subsequent mastering of industrial specialties. The eight-year school will be uniform in content and volume of learning in cities as well as in rural districts. In small settlements elementary four-class schools will remain in operation.

The teaching in the republic's schools will be carried out, as hitherto, in the mother language. The decision as to what kind of school with regard to the teaching language children should be sent to is left with the parents. As for the study of the Russian language in schools with Belorussian as the teaching language, or of the Belorussian language in schools with Russian as the teaching language, this too should be carried out according to the wishes of pupils and parents. This treatment of the problem, as it is quite rightly indicated in theses of the CC CPSU and the Council of Ministers USSR, will give the parents the right to decide which language will be obligatory for the child; it will eliminate administering of any kind in this important matter; and it will allow to finish the excessive burdening of pupils with language studies.

It is clear that in schools with the Belorussian or any other as the teaching language, pupils will study on a voluntary basis, the Russian language which is a powerful means of international communication and of the consolidation of the friendship of peoples of the USSR, and of their participation in the wealth of Russian and world culture. For us the study and knowledge of the Belorussian language is very important as the main element and means of the development of the national culture of the Belorussian people. Because of this the study of the Belorussian language should be encouraged and perfected in every possible way in schools with Russian as the teaching language as well.

The Ministry of Education has worked out projects of curricula for the new-type schools, and the compiling of programs and text books is being worked on. In addition to this, it is important to draw as close to life as possible, the pedagogical and training process, and to secure for the students a proper volume of solid and, as far as possible, complete knowledge, practice and skills. At the same time, it is necessary to avoid overburdening the pupils with studies and to prevent the programs from becoming blocked with unnecessary and secondary material.

The task put before the beginners' classes is to teach the children to read, write, and count well, to develop their speech and thinking, to give them elementary knowledge and conception of nature and society, and teach them the simplest habits of work. An important place in the educational and training work of schools, specially in the ideological education of young people, will be assigned to the teaching of languages, belles-lettres, history, and geography. The training of thoroughly educated people requires a deep study of the natural conditions, history, economics, and culture of their motherland and other countries of the world, and a knowledge of the laws of social development.

An important place in the eight-year school will be assigned to labor education, to the inculcation of practical habits, during labor classes as well as during school-free hours, by means of enrolling the pupils in socially-useful labor and self-service suitable to their age. The time set aside for work in school workshops and for training practice in experimental and training sections will be increased. In the process of practical studies the pupils will become acquainted with the technological properties of various materials; they will acquire practice and ability in the treatment of wood and metals, and in setting up of electrical installations, and they will learn to manufacture objects necessary in everyday life. Girls will acquire skills necessary in household management.

More attention will be given to the esthetic education of pupils during lessons in literature, drawing, singing and music; to the development of their artistic taste and ability to understand the content and means of expression of musical, initiative, and other forms of arts. The physical education will be carried out during physical-culture studies in regular and extra-curricular time as well as in the process of students' participation in various forms of physical labor.

The transition to compulsory eight-year education in accordance with the new curriculum is intended to begin in the 1959-1960 school year and to be completed during the

1962-1963 school year. In the course of this period of time, new textbooks will be prepared and published. During the 1959-1960 school year, classes first-to-fifth will be transferred to the new curriculum and programs and, during the following two years -- classes sixth and seventh. Graduation from seven-year schools will not be contemplated in 1962, since all seven-class pupils will have to continue their education in eight-year schools until the completion of studies. During this time, seven-year schools will be transformed into eight-year schools.

It is most important to make a correct plan of the school network in order to secure the absolute realization of the eight-year general education and the future development of secondary education. The reorganization of the school network must not result in any kind of deterioration in the supply of schools to the people. It is necessary to increase the responsibility of parents as well as that of party, state, trade-union, and Komsomol organizations, for the fulfillment of the law of compulsory education of children. Our whole community must become involved in this cause. Every case of non-attendance at school by children without valid reason should be discussed in worker's collectives, in enterprises, kolkhozes, institutions and organizations. In order to improve conditions for the realization of general education, we will have to extend the network of school dormitories, organize the transportation of pupils to and from schools, should they live at a distance of three to four, or more kilometers, and organize hot meals for school children.

Young graduates of eight-year schools will complete their full secondary education in secondary evening (shift) schools or in correspondence schools of general education, worker's polytechnic schools with industrial training, as well as in technical schools and other special educational institutions. Young people will study, without discontinuing industrial labor, in secondary general-education evening (shift) schools. For this part of the young generation technical vocational schools, all kinds of courses, as well as individual and brigade pupilage directly at the plants, will be the transitions stages. Depending on the concrete working conditions of factory-school students, studies in these schools may be conducted either in the evening or in the daytime, or else they can be organized on the basis of education by correspondence and non-attendance studies. In rural districts such schools may be seasonal, that is in operation mostly during fall and winter periods when the youths are less busy with agricultural labor. Improvement of the qualifications of students in youth's schools will be secured by studies of

special subjects the content of which will depend on the composition of the student groups wishing to perfect themselves in any of the available industrial specialties, or acquire new ones. The number of these schools must be considerably increased in order to involve in the training all youths and girls wishing to receive full secondary education without discontinuing industrial labor. It is expected that, in the course of the seven-year plan, the number of pupils in the senior classes of young workers' secondary schools will increase from 30,000 to 68,000, and those of young farmers' schools from 5,000 to 27,000. By the end of the seven-year plan, the number of pupils of secondary correspondence schools will increase from 3,800 to 15,000.

For the purpose of creating favorable conditions for studies, it is important to solve the problem of shortening somewhat the working day or working week of those young people who successfully combine industrial labor with studies in schools of general education. Managers and the trade-union organizations of enterprises, institutions and sovkhoses, and kolkhoz boards of administration must create suitable conditions for the successful work of young workers' and farmers' schools: whenever necessary, they must secure school premises, encourage in every possible way, the completion of the youths' secondary education and the perfecting of their industrial qualifications, and be mindful of the uninterrupted attendance of classes.

In schools of general education with industrial training the pupils will receive full secondary education and the vocational training necessary for work in any of the branches of national economy or culture. Industrial training and socially-useful labor will be carried out in training and industrial shops of enterprises, in student brigades of kolkhoses, in experimental and training farms, and in schools and inter-school industrial-training workshops.

Secondary schools with industrial training may be composed of the ninth, tenth, and 11th classes or, jointly with eight-year schools, of first-to-11th classes. The educational content of these schools is composed of general educational subjects as well as of technical and special courses giving the pupils theoretical and practical knowledge necessary for certain specialties. About two thirds of the school-hours will be spent for the completion of secondary education, and one third for industrial training. The correlation of theory and practice as well as the rotation of study and labor periods must be fixed in relation to the type and complexity of specialties for which the pupils will train. Certain secondary schools already contemplate the introduction, during the coming 1959-1960 school year, of industrial training, starting with the

ninth class, and the extension of the term of studies for one more year. During the following years, the number of such schools will gradually increase and, by the beginning of the 1963-1964 school year, all of the now existing 10-year schools will be reorganized into secondary schools with industrial training and will fully adopt the new curriculum and programs.

The vocational training of schoolchildren will be carried out on the basis of enterprises of the machine-building, chemical, construction, textile, timber and woodworking, and footwear industries, as well as in various enterprises of local and cooperative industries. In addition to this, special attention should be given to key trades offering opportunities for mass enrollment of youths in production labor, and one should also take into account the peculiarities of the use of female labor in national economy.

In schools of the rural districts, pupils of the ninth-to-eleventh classes will receive on the basis of local kolkhozes and RTS [Radio-telegraph stations] general agronomic and technical training in agriculture and, in addition, special training in one of the branches of agricultural production necessary for work in the field of tillage, animal husbandry, mechanization and electrification of agriculture, and construction.

It is equally expedient to organize the training of cadres for work in the systems of trade, consumers' cooperatives, and every-day repair and other services to the people. The type of industrial training in each school will be determined by the executive committees of oblast, city and rayon soviets. With this it will be expedient, for each single school, to carry out industrial training in not more than four trades.

In a number of the republic's schools work towards the organization of industrial training for the coming school year has already begun. It is a new and rather complicated undertaking. A good organization of industrial training of pupils will, in many ways, depend on the creative approach and local initiative, and on assistance which enterprises, kolkhozes, sovkhozes and corresponding departments who should give their utmost attention to vocational training of pupils, will give to schools and organs of public education.

In schools of the second stage, the present standard of general and polytechnic education, established for 10-year schools, will be preserved and even raised. The relationship of training and practice will be closer; the study material, especially for natural-science and mathematical subjects, will be supplemented by information about the latest achievements of science and technology. Thus, for example, while the present-day schools allot in their first-to-tenth classes 41

percent of the time for subjects of the polytechnic-cycle and industrial training, the eleven-year schools allot it 50.6 percent of the time.

A new type of educational and training institutions -- boarding schools -- will be widely developed in the republic. They will operate in accordance with the curricula and programs of eight-year and 11-year schools. The experiment of the first years of the work of boarding schools testifies to the great future of this type of educational and training institution. At present, there are 18 boarding schools with about 2,700 children in the republic. During the coming septennial, the number of children enrolled in boarding schools will be sharply increased. While the contingent of boarding-school pupils all over the USSR will increase, during the septennial, on the average, 14 times, in our republic it will increase more than 30 times, and by the 1965-1966 school year it will amount to 112,000 people. Sixteen new boarding schools with 4,800 pupils will be opened already during the current year. Model boarding schools, each with a capacity of 300, are under construction at present, and will operate at the Smolevichi and Vasilevichi GRES /hydro-electric power stations/, and two schools will open in Minsk. The foundation is being laid for 21 boarding schools which will be fully constructed in the 1960-1961 school year. 16 school buildings and dormitories to serve as extension of existing boarding schools are under construction now. The kolkhoz imeni Komintern of Mogilevskiy Rayon and kolkhoz imeni Stalin of Pinskiy Rayon are building boarding schools at their own expense.

In the future, as Comrade N.S. Khrushchev emphasized during the 21st Party Congress, it is intended to make it possible to educate all children in boarding schools, thus helping to solve the problem of communist upbringing of the rising generation. It is the duty of state, trade-union, Komsomol, and public organizations to give daily assistance to boarding schools in the carrying out of the main tasks put before them.

The reorganization of schools of general education requires a perfecting of the organization and methods of training. It is important to broaden the independent work of schoolchildren during lessons, and to secure active work of the whole class as well as of each individual pupil.

It is necessary to improve the school's educational work. Our efforts must be directed towards arming the youths with communist ideology and educating them in the spirit of socialist patriotism and internationalism so that, in work and life, they will be guided by the great ideas of Marxism-Leninism, and will be brought up in the revolutionary traditions of our party and people. The versatile educational and

training work with children must be directed towards cultivating in them collectivism, industriousness, conscious discipline, and the ability to overcome difficulties in the building of a new life.

In our time, society must have a greater part in the education of children, and parents, trade-unions, komsomol, and other organizations must be more widely enrolled in the realization of this most important aim. The work of parent's committees, of enterprises, kolkhozes, sovkhozes, and public organizations -- patrons of schools -- must be enlivened. One of the most important tasks of teachers, parents, and all public organizations is the further improvement of the work of cultivation in the pupils habits of civilized behavior in schools, in family life, and in public places. For this purpose, it is necessary to improve pedagogical propaganda among the people, and raise the responsibility of parents and all other adults for the upbringing of children.

In a century of rapid development of science and technology, the young generation must be provided with useful knowledge from earliest childhood, and popular-science and artistic literature must have a great part in it. Our writers, scientists, engineers, agronomists, and technicians must create a wealth of such literature for children. The Soviet schools must secure a thorough and harmonious development of the child's personality and his abilities and creative inclinations in the field of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and other sciences. It is necessary to practice, on a large scale, the organization of school groups, studios, and special lecturing bureaus; to create societies of young mathematicians, physicists, chemists, lovers of nature and engineering, and to reveal and carefully cultivate young talents.

The reorganization of schools brings many new things into the work of komsomol and pioneer organizations and broadens the content of their activities. It is necessary to extend their educational part in the shaping of communist ideology and the moral make-up of young pupils, and in the development of their initiative and independence of action in studies and labor.

The successful realization of the reorganization of schools of general education depends, first of all, on teachers, on their theoretical and ideological level and their pedagogical skill. It is necessary to provide better conditions for the work and life of teachers; to improve the training of teachers' cadres in pedagogical ^{institutes} and universities, as well as to organize work towards the raising of the teachers' qualifications; to introduce them systematically to the latest achievements of science, technology, and pedagogical practice;

and, in every possible way, to develop their creative initiative. It is important to extend the part of the scientific research institute of pedagogy and method institutions in the study and propagation of advanced pedagogical experiments, and in the working out of urgent pedagogical problems brought forward by life and the tasks of the reorganization of schools.

The present reform of popular education will be accompanied by a further growth of school networks and the number of pupils. It will require hard work and expenditure for the expansion and strengthening of the schools' material and educational base, and the elimination of the many shifts. The solution to these problems must be found in increased state capital investments, as well as in the initiative of kolkhozes in the construction and strengthening of the material basis of schools.

During the post-war years our kolkhozes constructed a great number of schools. It suffices to point out that in 1958 alone, 676 schools, with a capacity of 55,400, were built by the initiative method. For the year 1959 the kolkhozes undertook to construct about 800 school buildings by way of preparation for the new school year. Some kolkhozes construct school buildings according to standard designs. The "Stalinet" kolkhoz of Gorodishchenskiy Rayon and the "Budenovets" of Pruzhanskiy Rayon have constructed buildings with a capacity of 280. Three standard school buildings have been constructed by the "Pamyati Il'icha" kolkhoz of Borisovski Rayon. At the same time, many economically powerful kolkhozes have, so far, taken no part in the solution of this problem. For example, the secondary school of the "Rassvet" kolkhoz of Kirovskiy Rayon works in two shifts and has no facilities for polytechnic training. The task consists in furthering, by every possible means, the initiative of kolkhozes and cooperative organizations in the construction of schools, boarding schools, training workshops, and school dormitories.

The problem of finding jobs for the youths graduating from eight-years and secondary schools becomes one of utmost importance. It is necessary to overcome the negligent attitude of certain of our business executives who obstruct this work, and to break the resistance of bureaucracy to the enrollment of juveniles in productive labor.

The Gosplan, together with ministries and departments, must make detailed computations of annual demands for worker's cadres in various branches of national economy, and work out a perspective plan for the organization of labor for graduates of eight-year and secondary schools. Enrollment of young people in productive labor and the finding of jobs for them is a problem of paramount national importance.

The Soviet school of general education has entered a new stage of development. Its reorganization will be of the greatest importance for the future moral and mental development of the Soviet society; it will give the school a greater part in the life of Soviet society and, in an even higher degree, it will further the growth of our motherland's power and the realization of grandiose plans of communist building.

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